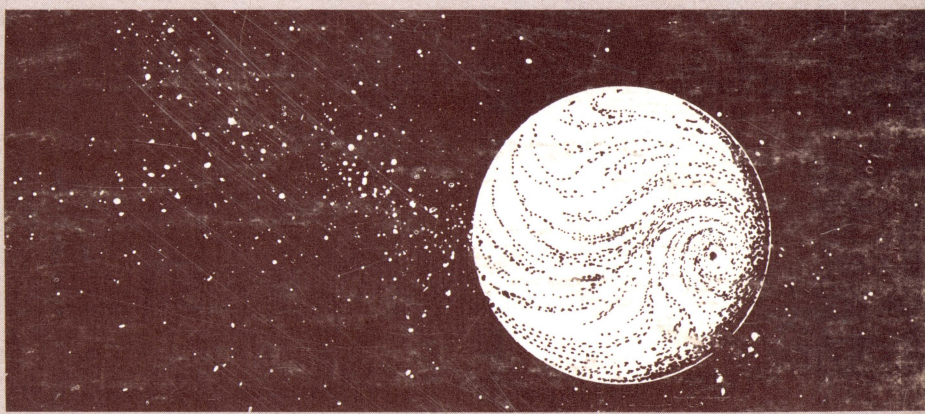
ORDEAL BY ESHAAR



Approved For Use With

TRAVELLER™

Science-Fiction Adventure in the Far Future

fasa

ORDEAL BY ESHAAR

An Adventure for TRAVELLER by

J. Andrew Keith
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Based on a concept by
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fasa

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Introduction

This booklet, entitled *Ordeal by Eshaar*, is a comprehensive adventure designed for use with GDW's TRAVELLER. Set in the Taemerlyk subsector of the Far Frontiers sector, it revolves around a diplomatic mission on a dangerous world.

It is assumed that this adventure will be administered by a referee who has read through this adventure and who is familiar both with it and with the rules for TRAVELLER. This situation calls for only the basic TRAVELLER booklets (Books 1, 2, and 3) and no additional supplements, books, or other information. As usual, paper, pencils, six-sided dice, and square-grid graph paper will prove helpful during the course of this adventure.

Requires only Basic Traveller

Although not required in order to play this adventure, certain other TRAVELLER materials may enhance the enjoyment of the situation considerably. Book 4, *Mercenary*, Book 5, *High Guard*, Supplement 1, *1001 Characters*, and Supplement 4, *Citizens of the Imperium*, can all be used in connection with *Ordeal by Eshaar*. The latter supplement also provides character generation tables for characters in the Diplomatic Service, should players be interested in using such individuals in this situation. Of course, other TRAVELLER books, supplements, and games may be useful as well.

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The following standards and assumptions are used in the text of this adventure.

Dates: All dates herein correspond to the Imperial calendar. The initial date for this situation is 190-1107; 190 is the current day (the 190th day of the standard 365-day year) while 1107 is the current year of the Imperium. Once the adventure begins, time should flow normally. If necessary, change the date to correspond to a local situation; however, this adventure is designed to be set against the backdrop of *The Fifth Frontier War*.

Date: 190-1107

Place: This adventure takes place on Eshaar (0206-E6C4839-3) in the Taemerlyk subsector of the Far Frontiers sector. Eshaar is a small planet, some 10,600 kilometers in diameter, with an insidious atmosphere and a temperature ranging from 100° to 150° Centigrade. A native sentient race on the world has secrets desired by both the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate; hence both powers maintain diplomatic missions on the world. Fears that open conflict would offend native sensibilities have forced them into an uneasy truce.

Place: Eshaar
Taemerlyk Subsector
Far Frontiers Sector
Beyond the Imperium

USING THIS ADVENTURE

The referee may use this adventure as an independent game situation with pre-generated characters (as written), or it may be used with existing characters from an existing campaign. Changes necessary for an existing campaign should be obvious.

REFEREE'S CHECKLIST

1. Assign characters.
2. State situation.
3. Refer players to background material.
4. Guide characters through situation based on their actions.

Referee's Checklist: The steps shown in the referee's checklist should guide the referee through the elements of administering this adventure. Characters are covered next in this section, then the basic situation. The background material is presented on page 20, with additional materials contained in the remainder of the adventure.

CHARACTERS

This adventure is intended for a band of adventurers numbering at least two and no more than eight. A group of pre-generated characters is supplied below, although the referee may allow other individuals instead.

1.	Ex-Marine Captain	67C789	Age 34	4 terms	Cr 2,000
	Cutlass-1, Revolver-2, ATV-2, Vacc Suit-1, Leader -2				Cutlass
2.	Retired Navy Starman	9886A9	Age 42	6 terms	Cr 1,000
	Vacc Suit-1, Admin-1, Computer-2, Rifle-2				Rifle
3.	Ex-Navy Lieutenant	6B3896	Age 34	4 terms	Cr 3,000
	Pilot-2, Body Pistol-3, Vacc Suit-0, Medical-2, Gunnery-2				
4.	Ex-Scout	B9473A	Age 26	2 terms	Cr 1,500
	Pilot-1, Air/Raft-1, Navigation-1, Vacc Suit-1, SMG-0				SMG
5.	Retired Other	35A773	Age 42	6 terms	Cr 4,000
	Shotgun-2, Electronic-3, Bribery-2, Vacc Suit-1				Shotgun
6.	Ex-Army Major	8489A6	Age 34	4 terms	Cr 1,000
	Rifle-1, SMG-2, ATV-3, Vacc Suit-1, Mech-2, Electronic-1				SMG
7.	Ex-Marine Force Commander	774486	Age 30	3 terms	Cr 1,500
	Cutlass-1, Revolver-1, ATV-2, Vacc Suit-2, Brawling-2				Revolver
8.	Ex-Diplomat	BA5949	Age 34	4 terms	Cr 10,000
	ATV-1, Vacc Suit-1, Laison-1, Dagger-1, Body Pistol-1				Body Pistol

A skill of 0 (for example, Vacc-0) has been assigned to show some familiarity with a skill, sufficient to allow use, but no real expertise. A skill level of 0 with a gun (for example, Carbine-0) shows the preferred or best weapon for an individual otherwise without weapon skill.

REFEREE'S TABLE OF CONTENTS

Listed below, the referee will find a quick reference to each major section of this adventure (as well as some subsections), where to find it, and how it should

be presented to the players. Sections marked REFEREE ONLY should be considered strictly as referee's information to be revealed to players only at the conclusion of the adventure. Those labelled INDIRECT ACCESS contain information that should be fed to the players by the referee; they should never be allowed to see the material in question (except under controlled circumstances). And finally, some sections — notably the mass of library data making up the Planetary Data briefing — will be marked DIRECT ACCESS and may be referred to by players without difficulty. However, the briefing material should be presented for inspection **only** when players have access to the Base Computer. This restriction is extremely important.

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The referee should also keep in mind that any Referee's Notes, even those which are found in sections to which the players have access, are restricted information. Steps should be taken to keep this material confidential.

Out of the Frying Pan . . .

It had seemed like a good idea at the time . . . the rising specter of war in the Spinward Marches threatened military service and — worse yet — slack business as the fear of raiders and Zhodani fleets grounded merchant starships. The adventurers had been debating where to go next, with the general consensus being "anywhere but the Spinward Marches!" So, when Dwil hault-Everuis of the Imperial Diplomatic Corps offered the group a job with an embassy somewhere outside the Imperium, it hadn't taken much to convince them. After all, 300 credits per week plus travel, subsistence, and lodging . . . a draw on government equipment . . . and a hefty bonus after a successful tour of duty . . . these were pretty good inducements to get away from a region that suddenly looked unhealthy.

The adventurers had obviously never heard of the planet Eshaar.

Now, three months later, they begin to see what they've let themselves in for. They've travelled in tight quarters over 30 parsecs beyond the Imperial border . . . but they are closer than ever to Zhodani space, which lies only a few jumps to coreward of their destination.

And what a destination! The planet is swathed in yellow-brown clouds; only once could they get a view of the surface from orbit, and that was through the eye of a gigantic, swirling storm that dwarfed normal hurricanes. When their shuttle finally docked with the groundside base, the adventurers first glimpsed the hellish environment of Eshaar. Oily brown clouds boiled overhead; everywhere fog and vapor steamed out putty-smooth sculptured rock formations, black sand, and bubbling yellow pools.

Within the Embassy dome, the Security Chief greets them with psionic shield helmets and a warning to keep them on any time they are outside the Imperial Quarters area (which is itself shielded); Zhodanis — the Enemy — are also in the dome, and Zhodani nobles are notorious for their psionic abilities. They are then led to a briefing room where they learn, at last, about the planet, its inhabitants, and the reason they have come.

Planetary Data

The information that follows is extracted from Imperial Base Library data. The material forms the basic indoctrination information required by all new arrivals at the Imperial Embassy on Eshaar.

Eshaar: Planet in the Taemerlyk subsector of the Far Frontiers sector. The official planetary statistics, based on the IISS survey of 1099, are as follows:

(0902-E6C4839-3) Non-industrial A G

Second of five planets of a class KO sun. Mean orbital radius .67 a.u. Period .56 standard year. Rotational period 18.7 standard hours.

Surface atmospheric pressure: average highland — 3. 1550 mm; average lowland — c. 3000 mm.

Percentage composition: CO_2 83%; N_2 9%; SiO_2 4%; CO 2%; other nitrogen and oxide compounds 2%.

Cloud composition: liquid droplets in atmospheric suspension. Mean percentage composition: H_2O (steam) 46%; S (liquid) 40%; H_2SO_4 10%; HNO_3 2%; HF 2%. Percentages vary depending on local conditions.

Remarks: "Eshaar" is a transportation of the name given to the planet by its inhabitants. By human standards, it is a hostile planet, with a deadly, corrosive atmosphere, and a mean surface temperature of 150° C. Both liquid sulfur and sulfuric acid serve as water in an environment where water exists only as steam and where all other oxygen is locked up in sulfur, carbon, and mineral oxides.

The planetary surface is rough and forbidding; erosion has divided the land surface into two zones — the highlands, composed of sedimentary rock sliced by acid-carved canyons and gorges; and the lowlands, where all sedimentary rock has been eroded away and carried off to the sea. Understandably, erosion proceeds at a rapid rate on Eshaar. Planetographic theory suggests that Eshaar's single ocean, slowly migrating against the planet's spin, collects the debris of millions of rivers and leaves behind new land, where acid erosion begins anew. The planetary surface has been rebuilt behind the circling ocean perhaps five times in the last thousand centuries.

Eshaaran Biology: Despite the poisonous conditions on Eshaar, there is life in enormous variety and diversity. Native life forms are silicone-based, with a chemosynthetic metabolism that draws energy from the chemistry of their environment.

The crystalline formations that pass for plants on Eshaar take liquid sulfur and gaseous water from the environment and manufacture sulfuric acid. Animals use sulfuric acid in sustained electro-chemical reactions with various metals (generally zinc or copper) within their bodies and give off as metabolic by-products liquid sulfur and steam. Many life forms, both plant and animal, metabolize the atmosphere directly; most share in the water-sulfur-sulfuric acid cycle. Eshaaran life forms have been referred to as "living storage batteries."

Eshaar Ashah: The name of the planet's natives for themselves. It translates roughly as "Companion-protectors of Eshaar." Unlike humans, they find the climate of Eshaar's highlands quite pleasant and are excellently adapted to their environment.

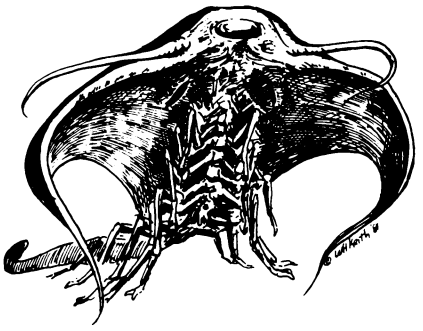
Adult Eshaarans average 2 meters in length, stand 1.2 meters tall, and mass around 90 kg standard. Their most striking features are the broad mantles running from the ends of their major tentacles to the base of the tail; these may span 2 meters. The membranes serve both as surfaces for chemosynthesis and as gliding wings. In the powerful updrafts and dense atmosphere over the Great Canyons, Eshaarans can stay aloft for 15 minutes. Eleven pairs of jointed, armored legs run from thorax to tail; these are equipped with pincer claws of various sizes. Two pairs of tentacles — one large, one delicate — surround the single, large eye, which is normally deep golden to red in color. Vision is largely in the violet-ultraviolet range.

Two orifices are located on each side of the thorax and are used to vent steam, a metabolic by-product. Modulated release of steam produces the hissing, whistling Eshaaran language, which has been compared to the shriek of leaky power plant steam pipes. An abdominal organ similar to an anemone-flower absorbs sulfuric acid and excretes liquid sulfur.

Eshaarans can produce powerful electric discharges between the tips of their major tentacles. Although certainly a side-product of the being's electro-chemical chemosynthesis, the nature of the discharge ability is not known. The Eshaar Ashah do not hunt and have no natural enemies, so this admirable defensive weapon's original purpose remains a mystery.

For purposes of brevity, stats and character generation for Eshaar Ashah are not included here. It is suggested that the Eshaarans be treated, for combat purposes, as animals with the following stats:

Weight	Hits	Armor	Wounds & Weapons	
90 kg	15/00	cloth	see below	A0 F0 S1



Eshaar Ashah can attack once each combat round (for three rounds) with electrical discharges. These attacks are made at close range (touching), hit on a roll of 6+, and breach vacc suits on 10+. (Vacc suits are well insulated and, unless breached, protect the wearer from other effects of the discharge.)

Eshaar Ashah Psychology: Imperial research groups are still learning about this alien race and, no doubt, will still be learning for centuries to come. The most striking facet of their alien outlook and way of thinking, however, is well-known even if not fully understood.

The Eshaar Ashah believe that the entire planet is itself a single, changing, living being, with themselves and every native live form making up a part of that being. They, the world's sentients, believe themselves to be the planet's nervous system, the way the planet can

know itself and be aware. All native customs, beliefs, and ethics are centered in this philosophy. For example, the natives feel that Eshaar "calls" them by showing signs of erosion in their cave-like homes; this "call" compels the entire community to move elsewhere in a great migration. When eroding cliffs at last crumble and fall, it is not Eshaaran cities that are wiped out, but merely the empty caves "provided by Eshaar" for the temporary use of the natives.

Each city's Sha Ev, the native ruling body, is largely selected by the "favors" bestowed upon individuals or ancestors by the planet; this council makes important decisions by seeing revelations of Eshaar's "will." The entire concept of mental well-being is based on a feeling of close and continual communion with Eshaar and the ecology.

The concept of killing any living being is foreign to Eshaarans. Mining operations of any sort would be viewed as an attack on a living being — the planet — and would be horrifying to the natives. They will not alter (save in minor and Eshaar-directed ways) the face of their world and will not tolerate drill- and explosive-wielding off-worlders. Among the Eshaar Ashah, there is as yet no consensus on whether aliens are "life-as-we-know-it." A few natives are not above killing Imperials — since carbon-based organisms can't really be "alive." Needless to say, there has been considerable difficulty in establishing friendly relations with the Eshaar Ashah. Early Imperial visitors found it hard to grasp that the natives reacted as strongly to the accidental destruction of ornamental shrubbery as they did to the murder of one of their own young.

ALL IMPERIAL PERSONNEL should exercise the utmost caution on this planet to avoid damaging any living thing. There are still numerous life forms unknown to Imperial taxonomy on Eshaar, and many, with silicone-based biochemistries, seem indistinguishable from rock formations. Injury to life, however accidental, or actions perceived as attacks on the planet itself (e.g., blasting, drilling, etc.) could have disastrous consequences for the Imperium. Survey teams engaged in such actions are urged to patrol carefully for native life forms in the area before beginning operations, to prevent diplomatic incidents.

Eshaarsha Sheeaar: Translated roughly as "Ordeal by Eshaar." This ceremony is central to Eshaaran civilization. Newly adult Eshaar Ashah are "introduced" to Eshaar and proven worthy to join the ranks of the companion-protectors of the planet by what is essentially a survival test. Candidates for citizenship are taken with great ceremony to a neighboring city and are required to travel on foot 10 to 15 kilometers across the lowlands back to the home city. Those who understand the planet, who can make use of the various "gifts" the planet may give to such a traveller, survive. Those who don't are thought to have been reclaimed by Eshaar.

Adult Eshaar Ashah who accidentally violate cultural taboos (deliberate acts seem to be literally unthinkable) must renew their communion with Eshaar by undergoing this ordeal. The decision to do so is entirely voluntary; the individuals are most distraught until they can make their peace with Eshaar.

Imperial Diplomatic Corps policy on Eshaar has been to observe all local laws and customs in every way possible, including volunteering to face Eshaarsha Sheeaar when caught in taboo violations. Failure to do so would cause a complete breakdown of relations and an end to Imperial hopes on Eshaar. To date, some twenty-seven Imperial staff members have entered the Ordeal by Eshaar; of

these, twenty-three are listed as "dead or missing in the line of duty." Of the survivors, three have returned to the Imperium on extended leave, while the fourth is presently confined to the Embassy hospital, recovering from severe burns and poisoning. Native survival rates are much higher, perhaps 85%.

Note that the Zhodani Embassy, in several cases, has also been forced to send key personnel on Ordeals. Of these, an amazing eight out of ten have returned — almost as high a survival rate as the natives enjoy. The possibility of some kind of cheating should not be overlooked, and all Imperial staff members are urged to be alert for evidence that this is indeed taking place; proof of such typical Zhodani duplicity would do much to damage the enemy cause.

Sha Ev: The ruling council of the Eshaar Ashah. The name means, roughly, "chosen" — membership depends on some dramatic blessing or sign bestowed by Eshaar, such as the finding of a sulfuric acid spring or a deposit of metal ore vital to native biology. Unfavorable signs occassionally result in the expulsion of individuals from the Sha Ev — a rare occurrence, since death is the usual sign of Eshaar's displeasure.

The Sha Ev govern through lengthy debates of various issues, which are generally resolved by a consensus of opinion on the interpretation of various signs from Eshaar. Local Sha Evs often fragment into argumentative factions called vifs (parties), but violence is unknown. Each Sha Ev has authority over a city and the immediate neighborhood. There is cooperation between Sha Evs but no actual unity.

Certain individuals in each vif seem to gather more respect than their fellows and become the chief spokesmen of those vifs, although rank has little meaning for Eshaarans. These individuals are the leaders in the debates, which may last for weeks, until overall opinion among the Sha Ev falls solidly on one side or another.

Imperial policy on Eshaar is to win over the Sha Ev to grant rights to affas (q.v.); this must be done by getting Sha Ev opinion to shift behind the pro-Imperial part among the vifs. The debate on the subject has raged since the first off-worlders arrived, with the vifs divided among the Imperial faction, the Zhodani faction, a group of isolationists who are against all foreign presence, and a large body which is neutral on the subject. This latter body is the most important vif at present — should it be influenced, it is quite possible that the question would be resolved. Personnel attached to the Embassy are urged to exercise care in their dealings with the Eshaar Ashah, and especially with members of the Sha Ev, in order to keep relations on a good footing.

Vif: A political faction in the Sha Ev. At present, a number of Vifs exist in the debate on off-world relations. These include:

Vif Efah'f: Also called the "Imperial faction." Favors closer ties with the Imperium; members see benefits from trade and exchange of technologies. While they are an important faction, they will not be able to promote an agreement until a majority of opinion coincides with their viewpoint.

Vif Eshaarah'f: Also known as the "isolationist party." The most vocal and numerous of the Sha Ev factions, this group favors non-involvement with any off-worlders. It has been weakened, however, by an internal split between a "moderate" party, which believes that no action should be taken at all, either for

or against the foreigners, and a radical group, which believes that off-worlders, since they are not a part of Eshaar, are not truly alive and should be killed.

Vif Faffs'f: Faction also referred to as the ''Zhodani party.'' The group cites the nearness of the Consulate, plus the trade advantages to be derived, as arguments in favor of their position. Recently, the party has gained considerable ground in the Sha Ev as a result of excellent luck in surviving a number of Ordeals by Eshaar. However, their party has yet to gain solid enough support among the rest of the Sha Ev, and until this happens, the faction will not have the strength to carry any agreements through.

Affas: The silicone analog of hydrocarbon petrochemicals, consisting of various arrangements of silicon, sulfur, oxygen and hydrogen atoms. Affas is formed over planetological periods from silicone-organic material buried under layers of sedimentary rock beneath the floor of the ocean. The sea bottom eventually becomes land, and affas occasionally appears on the surface as well-pools, released by erosion or tectonic activity. Pockets of affas occur in most areas, from a depth of hundreds of meters to just under the surface; unfortunately, local custom forbids sounding or drilling to locate these pockets. Imperial survey teams are presently engaged in searching for well-pools (and attempting to chart underground pools and pockets where native observation is not a problem). Such surface well-pools are rare, but one large natural well would provide enough affas for at least preliminary studies (and possibly synthesis) to be made. Discovery would also prove to the natives that Eshaar favors the Imperial presence.

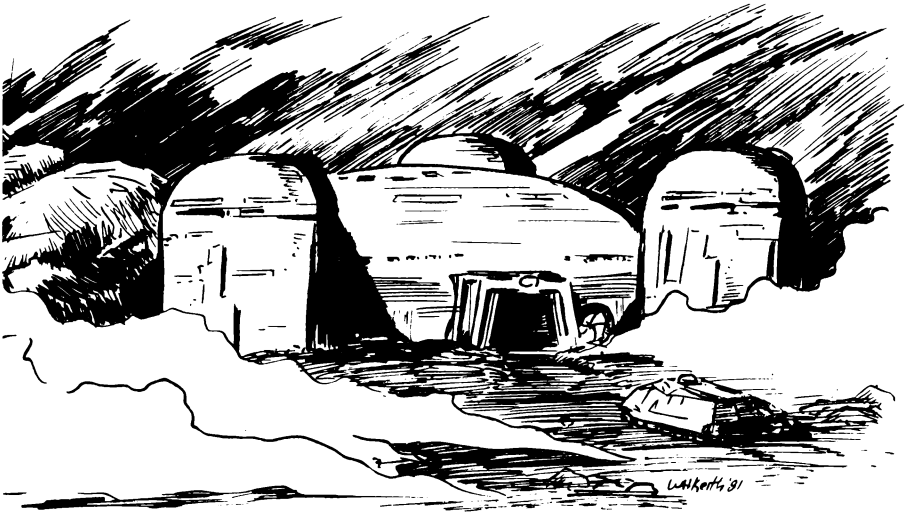
Affas is dark red, purple, or black in color; it is of thick, viscous consistency. The substance is heavier than liquid sulfur, and pools will probably be covered by a layer of sulfur or sulfuric acid. To date, only the well-pools used by the Eshaar Ashah have been examined. Discovery of a new pool by Imperial personnel would seem to be the only way to break the current deadlock in negotiations, for there has been no progress in attempts to trade for native-owned affas.

It is estimated that lubricants made from the hydrosilicones will increase the efficiency of high-temperature engines by approximately 12%. Native chemistry also uses affas to create a silicone-based plastic that shows remarkable resistance to heat and acid; it is this substance, coating the Enclave Domes and the equipment used by the off-worlders on Eshaar, that has made permanent structures possible on the planet. The value of this substance, like that of the lubricant, is obvious — and, with the Fifth Frontier War now in progress in the Spinward Marches, the importance of gaining clear control of the substance is not to be underestimated.

Embassy Enclave: An offworld installation erected on Eshaar to house the ambassadorial missions to the planet. The present structure is the fifth such complex constructed on Eshaar since the planet's discovery; the first four failed because of the corrosive effects of the atmosphere.

In 1105, the current structure was completed with native help, using an affas-based plastic compound to protect the structure from the elements. The need for native cooperation in the construction, however, forced a rather difficult state of affairs, for the natives decreed that all off-worlders on Eshaar should share the same quarters. This has led to one portion of the domed Enclave being set aside for the Imperium, another for the Zhodani, and a third for other visitors to Eshaar

— currently, a Vargr mission is present. Central administration and social areas are common to all three groups.



A NOTE ON PLANETARY CONDITIONS

Imperial personnel on Eshaar should take note of certain important problems caused by the ecology and climate of the planet.

Visibility: Vision is normally restricted to 50 meters or less. Occasionally, greater visibility is obtained locally, but effects of high temperature and pressure can cause mirages that make visibility highly unreliable. At night, visibility is reduced to zero; nights on cloud-covered Eshaar, intermittently broken by lightning and volcanoes, are **black**. Suit and vehicle lamps will provide limited visibility for 5 meters. Daylight lasts for 9.3 standard hours, in the short Eshaaran day.

Radios: Normal radio communications are limited to line of sight, about 50 meters. The planet itself is a powerful source of radio interference on all bands; in addition, ionic concentration in the atmosphere makes all but extremely close line-of-sight transmissions impossible. This will put Survey Teams and individuals outside the Enclave on their own. The powerful transmitters at the Enclave can boost beacon signals through the atmosphere to orbiting ships, but information exchange is blocked.

Equipment: All equipment exposed to the outside atmosphere must be specially treated with a native affas-based plastic compound. Any equipment which is not "sharproofed" and continually maintained between outdoor uses will rapidly fail. Most equipment in the Enclave intended for possible outdoor use has already been so treated. Personal equipment, such as weapons, armor, or electronics gear, which has not been so treated should never be used in the atmosphere.

We regret to say that the supply of affas available to the Imperium in the Enclave is extremely small, and modifications of any private equipment are not possible at this time.

Weapons: The Eshaar Ashah, of course, will be offended by the open display of weapons; they are sophisticated enough to recognize guns for what they are. Diplomatic problems aside, refractive distortions of the atmosphere severely restrict range and accuracy of all weapons.

Referee's note — range: Sharproofed projectile weapons will function but have a DM of -3 applied to hit at medium range. For combat purposes, medium range extends for 50 meters; combat at longer ranges is impossible. Because of the atmosphere's constant fogginess, lasers will hit targets only at close range (less than 6 meters) with a DM of -1 to hit.

Referee's note — oxygen: Imperial characters may attempt to use their oxygen reserves as a weapon. O_2 does not react chemically with the atmosphere, nor will it poison native life forms. It may be used, however, to create an artificial smoke screen or to turn aside or startle various life forms, because the gas is so cold compared to the local air temperature.

SECURITY BRIEFING

Upon completion of their basic indoctrination, the adventurers are given a more specific briefing concerning the part they are to play on Eshaar. The information given below should be given to them by the referee before the start of the adventure proper.

Affas is the key to Eshaar's importance. The silicone-based petrochemical could be of immense value to the war effort in the Spinward Marches — for whichever side gains control over a source of the rare substance **and** learns how to process it into a usable form. Affas could improve the performance of high-temperature engines and power plants by up to 12%; in addition, there are other useful applications in plastics and other derivatives that make the value of affas incredibly great.

Naturally, both the Imperium and the Zhodani are vitally concerned with Eshaar and the benefits to be gained there. Zhodani intelligence is hard at work on several schemes to win exclusive rights to affas. The adventurers have been brought in by the Imperium to support the Intelligence officer attached to the embassy, Wessen Kalleroy. He is understaffed and needs the adventurers to help him plan and execute operations designed to counter Zhodani espionage efforts.

Kalleroy has gathered some information in the period preceding the arrival of the adventurers. Though it may not be reliable since it has not yet been verified, it gives the group a place from which to start in their activities on Eshaar. Their primary responsibility will be to exploit Kalleroy's major coup — the subversion of a Vargr attached to a pro-Zhodani mission now at the Enclave as observers. The details of how to exploit this contact will be left largely up to the adventurers, as they have a greater freedom of action than Kalleroy. Kalleroy feels that the Zhodani are keeping too close a watch on his activities . . . and so cannot afford to take an active role in the intrigue between the two powers on Eshaar.

INFORMATION

Aegzirr, a junior Vargr diplomat, has access to secret Zhodani information and is willing to betray it to the Imperials if they will "look after his interests."

Survey Team casualties have been very high in the past three months. In that period, the Imperium has lost eight expeditions entirely, plus members of several others. The Zhodani in the same period have lost only one expedition.

Computer technicians from the Vargr mission have been working with the Zhodani on high-security computer codes.

The Zhodani Intelligence chief is one Shivianzhdistebr, a notorious lord almost certainly responsible for a particularly devious plot to capture an Imperial Azhanti Class warship last year. His presence on Eshaar suggests the depth of Zhodani's commitment to securing affas.

The Embassy Enclave

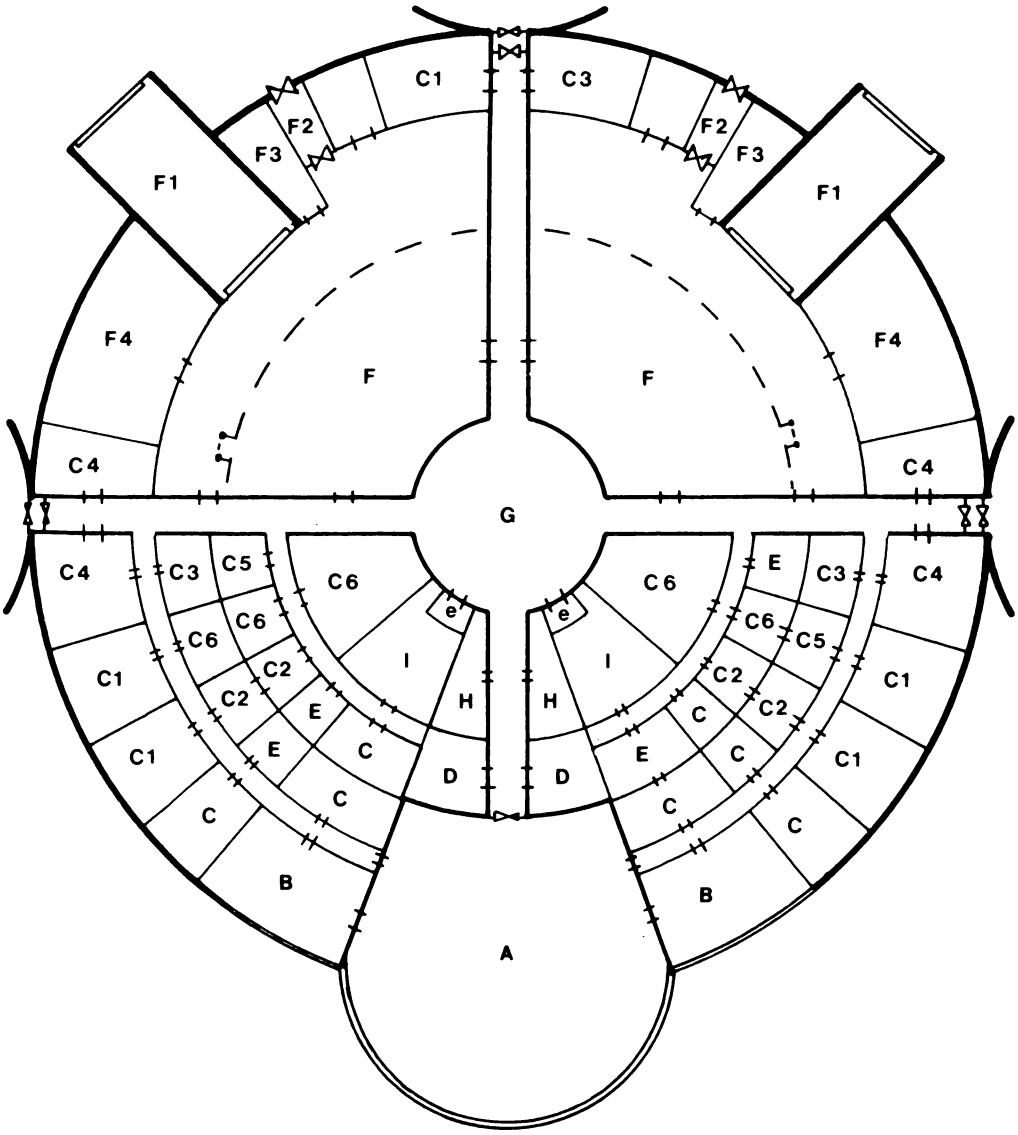
The single off-worlder habitation on Eshaar is an Imperial Scout Service #92 dome; it has been constructed, with native help, against a rocky cliff so that one wall of the dome extends into an Eshaaran cave where meetings and debates of interest to the off-worlders are held. Satellite domes connected to the main structure provide living quarters and support facilities for each off-world group present. Currently, the Imperials and the Zhodanis each occupy opposite satellite domes while a third satellite is occupied by a Vargr observation group, allies of Zhodani.

The rival groups, understandably, intermingle in the main dome as little as possible during duty hours; most of their offices and labs are duplicated on opposite sides of the enclave. A certain amount of mingling takes place after hours — during social gatherings in the Common Room, primarily — to try to gather information, to score minor psychological victories, and to attempt to guess what "They" are up to.

Deckplan, Main Dome, Level 1

A. Common Room: the one place where Zhodanis, Imperials, and the Eshaar Ashah can meet together, for the double thickness, vacuum insulated affas-plastic wall protrudes into an Eshaaran cave, and translator jacks are built into the wall at various points. Formal and social gatherings of off-worlders are held here as well.

B. Private Conference Rooms: allows conversations with natives as above but reserved for private use of Imperials or Zhodanis.



Deckplan, Main Dome, Level 1

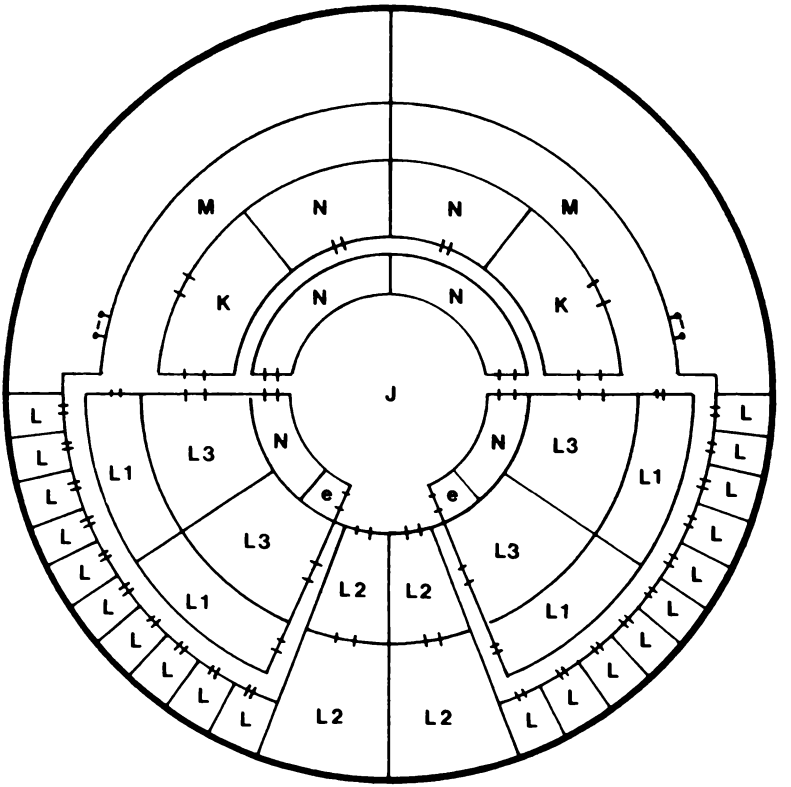
IRIS VALVE

SLIDING DOOR

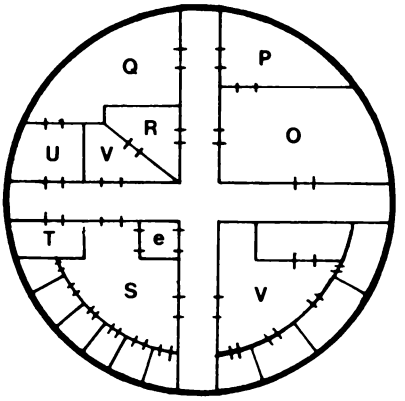
LADDER

e ELEVATOR

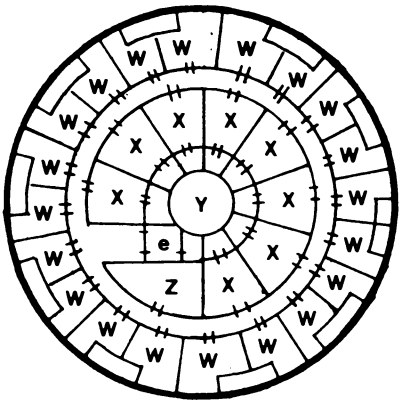
0 12m



Deckplan, Main Dome, Level 2



Deckplan, Satellite Domes, Level 1



Deckplan, Satellite Domes, Level 2

C. Office Spaces:
   C1. Ambassador's Office
   C2. Military Attache
   C3. Security Chief
   C4. Security Department
   C5. Intelligence Chief
   C6. Intelligence Department
D. Laboratory Spaces
E. Storage
F. Vehicle Bays: storage and maintenance for various surface and grav vehicles used by surveys. Overlooked by Level 2 balcony, heavy machinery, cranes.
   F1. Vehicle Airlocks
   F2. Personnel Airlocks
   F3. Decontamination gear for airlocks
   F4. Vehicle Equipment Storage
G. Rotunda: recreation area with benches, artwork, and displays of ornamental trees and exotic flora.
H. Life Support
I. Computers

Deckplan, Main Dome, Level 2

J. Admin: control center for dome. Contains monitors, life support controls, internal communication for entire base, and is shared by Zhodanis and Imperials.
K. Communications: maintains contact with respective fleets, when local conditions permit.
L. Office Spaces: offices and labs for various science departments — planetology, biology, meteorology.
   L1. Situation rooms: display maps for survey plots, meteorology, planetography
   L2. Private Ambassadorial offices
   L3. Administrative offices
M. Balcony overlooking vehicle bays
N. Storage

Deckplan, Satellite Domes, Level 1

O. General mess, lounge
P. Galley
Q. Food Storage, medical storage
R. Life support, recycling equipment
S. Sick Bay
T. Medical offices
U. Medical lab
V. Recreation room — library, computer simulation games, workout equipment

Deckplan, Satellite Domes, Level 2

W. Quarters (double occupancy)
X. Officers, Diplomats, Administrators Quarters (single occupancy)
Y. Life support
Z. Personal lockers, storage

THE IMPERIAL EMBASSY

Seventy-seven individuals currently make up the staff assigned to the Imperial mission on Eshaar. Of these, only a handful are of major importance. The rest include minor diplomats, clerical and administrative personnel, scientific staff, and security people. The referee can create these persons as desired or make use of pre-generated characters from *1001 Characters* or *Citizens of the Imperium*.

The following are the major figures in the Imperial Mission at present:

1. Ambassador and Chief of Mission — Temis Vayne hault-Atterlin
   Ambassador 69569C Age 38 5 terms Cr 5,000
   Laison-3, Revolver-1, Admin-2, Vacc Suit-1 Travellers
2. Chief of Intelligence — Wessen Kalleroy
   Navy Commander 7A9A89 Age 34 4 terms Cr 10,000
   Body Pistol-2, Jack-of-all-Trades-2, Streetwise-1, Vacc Suit-1
3. Military Attache — Colonel Robar Sullivan
   Army Colonel 7B6775 Age 42 6 terms Cr 15,000
   Leader-2, Admin-1, Tactics-1, Rifle-2
4. Chief of Security — Jael Pendergist
   Marine Captain 99A788 Age 30 3 terms Cr 5,000
   SMG-1, Vacc Suit-1, Cutlass-2, Gambling-1 Cutlass
5. Senior Geologist — Bassem Havesendin
   Scientist 786AA7 Age 42 6 terms Cr 10,000
   Computer-3, J-o-T-1, Vacc Suit-2, Admin-2
6. Junior Geologist — Kello Myest
   Scientist 9979B6 Age 30 3 terms Cr 5,000
   Computer-2, Vacc Suit-2, J-o-T-1

A NOTE ON IMPERIAL CHARACTERS: The above characters are generated in accordance with rules presented in TRAVELLER Supplement 4, *Citizens of the Imperium*. These rules present no major deviations in character generation but allow a number of non-military career types. One new skill from those rules is used for these characters; that skill, Liaison, is explained below.

Liaison: The individual is trained in the art of dealing with others; this skill is usable in relations with members of military units, citizens in a community, and alien or foreign cultures. This individual is trained to subordinate his or her own views and prejudices where they may conflict with those held by the individuals being dealt with. As a result, greater cooperation may be achieved and substantial progress in mutual projects made. Liaison is primarily used as a positive DM on the reaction table in Book 3.

Referee: Liaison is similar to both streetwise and admin skills. Streetwise tends to deal with unsavory aspects of society, while admin deals with the formal bureaucratic structure. Liaison is a formal training that spans both but also extends to contact with alien cultures. Liaison may be used as the equivalent of the next lower level of either streetwise or admin where necessary; thus, liaison-2 is the equivalent of streetwise-1.

EQUIPMENT

The Imperial Embassy has a great deal of equipment on hand — everything conceived as necessary by the principal officers of the diplomatic mission. Player characters may draw such equipment as is deemed necessary for various operations from the available stores. The fact that equipment destined for use on the surface must be specially treated to prevent corrosion makes it essential that player-characters use what is on hand at the Embassy rather than gear purchased independently.

In the equipment outlined below as being available, no quantities are given. For the most part, enough duplicate equipment exists to make quantities unimportant. The referee may, at his discretion, hinder the availability of equipment.

Weapons: Weaponry is not an important part of the equipment available on Eshaar, since it is unlikely that it can be used without destroying everything that has been accomplished in winning native cooperation. However, virtually any weapon outlined in Book 1 will be available; if Book 4, *Mercenary*, is used, equipment up to Tech Level 12 is available.

Personal Equipment: Treated Vacc Suits are available for everyone in the Embassy, with a number of spares. Vacc Suits that have not been sharproofed will break down in a matter of hours, causing death. Sharproofed vacc suits may begin to corrode at the joints after 24 hours of continuous exposure to the environment. Suit patch kits, each with ten patches, are standard issue with all suits. Air tanks, each tank holding a 3-hour supply of air, are also standard; two are usually worn.

Personal Devices; Vision Aids; Tools: Most if not all of these pieces of equipment are available. The referee should remember to avoid use of those devices which are totally unnecessary (bullhorns, for example). He should also keep in mind the limitations imposed by environmental conditions. (See page 10.)

Shelters: No shelters are available for Eshaaran use.

Psionic Shields: Because of the Zhodani presence, psionic shielding is necessary; otherwise, the psionic abilities of the Zhodani would soon end any hope of Imperial success. Psionic shield helmets must be worn at all times within the main dome. Each weighs 1000 grams and generates electronic impulses on frequencies which mask brain wave activity. The satellite dome assigned to Imperial use has a built-in psishield, as do vacc suits, vehicles, and ships employed on the Eshaar station.

Psionic Shields

Translators: Within the dome, small (500 gram) computer-assisted translators are worn on belts or strapped to the legs of everyone who may have to deal with individuals of one of the other races present. Translator jacks are built into the wall of the conference rooms adjoining the Eshaaran cave; personnel wishing to talk to natives plug in their units and hold conversations at any of a number of stations. Vacc suits have translation gear built into their communications electronics, though without the resources of the base computer, conversations with natives away from the enclave will be on a very basic level.

THE ZHODANI EMBASSY

The Zhodani Consulate is a major interstellar empire to core-spinward of the Imperium and has been one of the Imperium's chief adversaries over the past several hundred years. As this adventure is taking place, the Zhodani are engaged in the Fifth Frontier War against the Imperium; on Eshaar, the war is one of diplomatic maneuvering to win affas from the natives to the exclusion of their Imperial enemies.

The Zhodani are descendants of humans transplanted by the mysterious Ancients thousands of years ago and are, in most respects, identical to other branches of Humaniti. Their long genetic isolation has resulted in their being for the most part tall (210 cm is not uncommon), slender, and thin of face. Their greatest divergence, however, is in the area of psionics. Zhodani hold that they have a natural ability in psionics, and all nobles receive training at an early age. In actuality, it appears probable that the Zhodani have no greater talent than other humans, but make greater use of what talent they have through their early training. In addition to the nobles, an intendant class also receives psionic training; these intendants actually do much of the work running Zhodani government, striving for the reward of nobility granted for faithful and competent service.

Zhodani psionics may allow them to read unshielded human or Vargr minds. They find it impossible to interpret what they can read of the minds of the Eshaar Ashah, because the natives are so very different culturally and biologically.

The Zhodani embassy staff is divided between the nobles (leaders), the intendants (staff administrators, military officers, supervisors), and the various proles (staff workers, soldiers, and menial laborers). Zhodani society is founded on the absolute rule of the nobility over the psionically blind proles. The nobles are

known and respected by the proles for their power and their strength. While non-Zhodani may consider the Zhodani nobles devious and oppressive, such views usually fail to take into account the fact that psionics makes it easy for a noble to deal with his subjects. The fact of psionics makes a Zhodani noble (or intendant) able to see other views than his own, and to manipulate situations toward some goal, all the while creating circumstances that confuse or mislead non-Zhodani. Non-Zhodani see this sort of situation as devious.

For more information on the Zhodani, interested persons may consult the *Journal of the Travellers Aid Society*, No. 9, which contains a thorough examination of their culture and characteristics. Book 3 of TRAVELLER should be consulted for details of the psionics abilities available.

ZHODANI CHARACTERS

The following are the senior Zhodani personnel attached to their embassy on Eshaar. The referee should feel free to create other characters in lower echelon positions. Zhodani characters are created exactly as normal humans, except that characters of social levels A and higher will be fully trained in psionics. (A is the Intendant class, B and higher the nobles.)

1. Ambassador — Vlidentzinstebr
   Ambassador 68489C Age 46 7 terms
   Liaison-2, Admin-3, Computer-1, Vacc-1, Revolver-2
   Psionic strength rating: 6 Talents: Telepathy, Clairvoyance.
2. Chief of Intelligence — Shivianzhdistebr
   Captain, Zhodani Navy 8B6BBC Age 38 5 terms
   Leader-3, Admin-1, Computer-1, Body Pistol-1, J-0-T-1
   Psionic strength rating: 10 Talents: Telepathy, Telekinesis
3. Military Commanding Officer — Bredzhitshatl
   General, Zhodani Army 697A8B Age 42 6 terms
   Leader-2, Tactics-2, Admin-1, Computer-2, Revolver-2
   Psionics strength rating: 9 Talents: Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Awareness

Some Notes on Zhodani Characters: The above nobles are the individuals who direct and lead the Embassy. Note that the Ambassador is the technical and titular head of the Embassy; the Chief of Intelligence, however, may, or may not be answerable to him in matters of policy and intelligence. The actual activity of the embassy (important activity) will be undertaken by Intendants (social class A; they should be generated as needed.

ZHODANI EQUIPMENT

The Zhodani have equipment similar in all respects to that available to the Imperials. The referee is responsible for arming and equiping Zhodani antagonists throughout the adventure. This should be balanced to present an even and exciting game.

THE VARGR EMBASSY

The third dome of the Enclave living modules has been set aside to hold dignitaries from other off-world communities; at this time, it houses a Vargr mission of approximately 30 individuals. This mission is from the Dominion of Stars, a small Vargr state allied with the Zhodani.

The Vargr are one of the Six Major Races, inhabiting the region to rimward of the Imperium. They are derived from carnivore/chaser stock and have been proven to be genetically manipulated, transplanted descendants of Terrestrial canines. The Ancients are generally held responsible for their development. Physically unimpressive, the Vargr average about 1.6 meters in height, massing about 100 kg. They are upright, bipedal, with digitigrade rear limbs and human-like hands. Their physical similarity to humans enables them to use human equipment without difficulty.

Vargr are resentful of distant central authority, proud, and loyal to their immediate supervisors, their race, and their clan-mates. Their behavior is notoriously inconsistent. Vargr governments tend to be unstable, and no union of all the Vargr has ever been established. There are a large number of small Vargr states. Some are allied with the Imperium; some, like the group represented here, back the Zhodani, while still others are neutral.

Of the Vargr Embassy staff, several individuals are fairly important.

1. Ambassador — Suzroeks
   Ambassador 895A6B Age 46 7 terms Cr 20,000
   Liaison-3, Vacc Suit-1, Gambling-2, Computer-2, Admin-3
2. First Secretary — Thanaezgung
   First Secretary 6A89B9 Age 38 5 terms Cr 10,000
   Liaison-2, Computer-4, Admin-1, Vacc Suit-1
3. Chief of Security — Kfikaedh
   Army Captain 9B7786 Age 38 5 terms Cr 5,000
   Leader-1, Rifle-2, Tactics-1, SMG-2, Brawling—3
4. Third Secretary — Aegzirr
   Third Secretary 7A8899 Age 26 2 terms Cr 5,000
   Liaison-1, Admin-1, Computer-1, Vacc Suit-0

Referee's Note: Vargr may be generated normally; the only modification to regular procedures is a DM-1 on Strength and Endurance and a DM+1 on Dexterity. The referee should feel free to add additional characters as needed.

The Vargr in the Enclave do not participate in Survey activity; they are present as observers and supporters of their Zhodani allies. They have a limited amount of sharproofed equipment for those occasions when they do venture outside the Enclave. Within the domes, they have the use of the same general range of equipment as is available to the Imperial and Zhodani groups.

Though they are allied with the Zhodani, the Vargr in the Enclave do use psionic shielding equipment, both large screens to protect their living area and individual helmets for use in the common area. Even allies are not fond of having their minds open to outside inspection.

The Diplomatic Situation

Though the presence of the Eshaar Ashah is a complication in the Imperial and Zhodani search for affas, both sides have been forced to conclude that diplomacy will be cheaper and quicker than attempts to seize Eshaar's resources by force. The corrosive atmosphere ruins unprotected equipment in hours, and sharproofing depends on native good-will. Computer studies estimate that a military effort to eliminate the Eshaar Ashah and take control of the planet would cost the equivalent of at least 5 divisions of elite Imperial Marines. Furthermore, if the Eshaaran population were eliminated, knowledge of processing and use of affas would be lost. Neither the Imperium nor the Consulate can at present afford to launch an attack and then speed time in researching the secrets of affas; both prefer to attempt to gain native favor and win rights to the substance, as well as the secrets of its chemistry.

DIPLOMATIC INTERACTION

During the early part of this adventure, activity is broken into weeks of gametime. During the course of each week, both Imperials and Zhodani will be sending out survey missions, meeting with the natives to try to persuade them to grand concessions, gathering information, and attending social functions. The players will be forced into this round of society, negotiation, and intrigue. Most dominant throughout the game will be the opinions of the natives — these opinions will dictate the situation and determine whether the Imperium, the Zhodani, or the native Isolationists come out ahead in the diplomatic maneuvering on Eshaar.

The referee is responsible for keeping track of the relative positions of the various Eshaaran vifs. At the start of the adventure, he should set up a piece of paper with the following information recorded on it:

Vif Efah'f	Vif Eshaarah'f	Vif Eshaarah'f	Vif Faffs'f	Vif Shah
(Imperial)	(Moderate Isol.)	(Radical Isol.)	(Zhodani)	(Conserv.)
1	2	3	3	4

The numbers represent the point values assigned to each faction at the start. Points are added to each party depending on events, rumors, and player actions; "victory" is achieved when one vif's point total is at least twice that of the next largest vif. Victory for the Imperials ends the game with a triumph for the Imperium on Eshaar. The Isolationist parties, if they win, will seek to throw the offworlders out — the radicals will use violence. The Zhodani party would grant all concessions to the Zhodani, a major disaster for the Imperium. Finally, victory for the Conservatives would indicate a stalemate that might not be broken for years.

The players may be kept appraised of the **relative** positions — but not the point totals — of each vif during the course of the game.

Player actions during the game will influence the political situation on Eshaar; damage to Eshaaran life, to Eshaar itself, or to Zhodani or Vargr inside the domes are all potentially quite damaging to the Imperial position. On the other hand, positive value is gained by the discovery of affas (a sign that Eshaar "favors" the Im-

perials) or by survival of an Ordeal by Eshaar. The actions of non-player characters (of all races) and the effects of rumors are covered later; the following is a brief summary of the effects of **character** actions only.

Action	Points added to:				
	Imperial	*Moderate*	*Radical*	*Zhodani*	*Conserv.*
Eshaaran life killed	0	1	1	0	0
Eshaar "attacked"	0	4	5	3	0
Native killed or wounded	0	2	2	1	2
Off-worlder killed	0	1	1	1	1
Fighting in Enclave	0	1	1	0	1
Affas discovered	15	0	0	0	0
Ordeal survived	5/person	0	0	0	0

Actions must be witnessed by natives in order to give points; the discovery of affas requires that proof be brought back, and if the natives learn that it was discovered by drilling, there will be an extremely negative reaction.

Should some action be taken by players not covered by this table, the referee should use judgment to determine the effects. The basic rule is this: most negative events (off-worlder mistakes and the like) will greatly aid the isolationist parties. They may have some slight effect on the Conservatives and will only occasionally benefit the Zhodani party.

EVENTS

Each week, non-player characters (NPCs) will influence the situation in some way or another. To represent these actions over which the players have no control, the referee should consult the Event Table each week.

EVENT TABLE

Die	*First*					
Rolls	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
S 1	*	A	B	C	D	E
e 2	F	*	G	H	I	J
c 3	K	L	*	M	N	O
o 4	P	Q	R	*	F	G
n 5	A	B	C	D	*	E
d 6	R	*	*	*	*	R

Each letter on the Event Table represents a particular event, explained below. The referee should feel free to change results as he wishes, to eliminate an event already required by a previous roll, for instance. An asterisk (*) indicates that TWO events will take place: roll two more times for those events, with additional asterisk results indicating an event of the referee's choice instead.

Explanation of Events

A. Radicals gain ground in weekly debates of the Sha Ev. Add 1D points to the Radical position.

B. Moderates gain ground in weekly debates of the Sha Ev. Add 1D points to the Moderate position.

C. Conservatives gain ground in weekly debates of the Sha Ev. Add 1D points to the Conservative position.

D. Pro-Imperials gain ground in weekly debates of the Sha Ev. Add 1D points to the Imperial position.

E. Pro-Zhodanis gain ground in weekly debates of the Sha Ev. Add 1D points to the Zhodani position.
F. The Zhodani ambassador gives convincing arguments to the Sha Ev. His Liaison value (2) is subtracted from the Imperial point total.
G. Imperial Ambassador hault-Atterlin gives convincing arguments before the Sha Ev. His Liaison value (3) is subtracted from the Zhodani position.
H. A Zhodani is sent on Ordeal for a minor transgression. Referee rolls 2D. On a 6+, the Zhodani survives; Zhodani faction receives 5 points.
I. A junior Third Secretary of the Imperial Embassy accidentally shatters an ornamental plant while visiting a native residence. The Moderates and Radicals each receive 1 point, and the unfortunate Secretary is sent on Ordeal. He will survive on an 11+ on 2D; in this case, the Imperium receives 5 points.
J. An Eshaaran leader, a prominent Imperial spokesman, is found dead. The Zhodani are implicated. Add 2 points to Moderates, Radicals, and Conservatives, and 1 point to the Imperials.
K. Through seismic probing, the Imperials discover affas — 60 feet underground. Kello Myest publicly protests the prohibition on drilling for it. The Moderates receive 2 points, the Radicals 3 points. The Zhodani receive 1 point.
L. A Zhodani is discovered dead in the Main Meeting Hall. Evidence points to the Imperium. The Moderates, Radicals, and Conservatives receive 1 point each. One point is subtracted from the Imperial position.
M. A pro-Zhodani native spokesman is killed; the Imperials are implicated. Moderates, Radicals, and Conservatives each receive 2 points; the Zhodani receive 1 point.
N. A junior Imperial diplomat starts a fight with a Zhodani, witnessed by the natives. Moderates, Radicals, and Conservatives each get 1 point.
O. A marine is seen by the natives leaving the dome with an openly displayed rifle, which they know is a weapon. Radicals, Moderates, and Conservatives each receive 1 point.
P. Zhodani security guards are placed in the Vargr dome to supplement Vargr security measures.
Q. An Imperial diplomat is caught sneaking into the Zhodani side of the Enclave and is returned unceremoniously. He is not injured, only embarrassed.
R. The Sha Ev proclaims that Eshaar must give a sign of favor to the offworlders within 4 weeks or the Isolationist party will be supported. In 2 weeks, add 15 points to the Isolationist faction with the most points. Both sides double their number of survey parties per week.

RUMORS

Each week, a varying number of rumors become available to the players. These rumors represent information acquired or overheard during the course of other activity that week. To find the number of rumors, roll 1D. On a roll of 1, one rumor is revealed. A 2 or 3 grants two rumors, while 4-6 allows three rumors to be heard.

Rumors are drawn from the list given below, in any order the referee desires. He may repeat previously revealed rumors; it is advised, however, that as many different rumors as possible be made available. Some rumors, marked with an asterisk (*), are of especial importance; if not all rumors on this list are revealed to the players, these at least **must** be.

1. There are growing signs of union between the Isolationist parties in the Sha Ev.
2. A lost Imperial Survey Team member was recently discovered with his suit ripped open — possibly murdered by Radicals.
*3. A geologist is sure that affas can **only** be found in large amounts in the Lowlands and that it must lie under pools of liquid sulfur.
4. Shivvianedzhdstebr has not appeared in public (at social events or in Admin) for several days. Is he up to something new?
*5. The senior geologist, Bassem Havesendin, complains that Kello Myest, a recent arrival to his department, is spending more time socializing than he is working.
*6. Kello Myest complains about restrictions imposed on the surveys. He thinks native reaction would not be that bad if core samples were taken in the usual way; there is not the need for such tight security.
*7. In the past three months, the Imperium has lost four times the number of survey vehicles as in the entire previous year.
*8. Kello Myest claims that his studies show that affas, if it is to be found anywhere in the Lowlands, will be found at the foot of Flatcrest Ridge. Another geologist agrees, though not as confidently.
9. A prominent figure in the pro-Imperial faction of the Sha Ev has been seen in conference in the Meeting Hall with Zhodani diplomats. He has remained sympathetic in debates, but this could be a sign of wavering support.
10. Regina has fallen to a Zhodani attack. (Zhodani faction receives 2D points.)
11. The Zhodani are winning in the Marches. (Add 2 points to the Zhodani total.)
12. The Imperials are winning in the Marches. (Add 1D points to the Imperial total.)
13. A security man saw someone skulking about the Imperial Psionic Shield generators. The guard was unable to apprehend or identify the intruder.

THE VARGR CONTACT

A prime mission for the adventurers in the Enclave is the exploitation of a newly acquired source of information from the Zhodani camp — a Vargr who has chosen to sell out his Zhodani allies and supply information to the Imperium.

Actually, **two** Vargr diplomats are involved. At first, the players will know only of Aegzirr, a relatively junior functionary who is willing to pass information because the Zhodani were involved in the death of several of his clan-mates, news of which has only recently arrived. But another Vargr, a much more important official named Thanaezgung, is related to the same clan and is, in fact, secretly behind the information pipeline.

The two Vargr are passing information out of a desire for vengeance on the Zhodani and not for any material gain. They are, however, nervous, afraid of Zhodani reprisals if they are discovered and, consequently, may prove hard to handle. The players should make a reaction roll for each time they meet with the Vargr to gain information; Liaison and Bribery skills may be used as positive modifiers. Generally, a roll of 6 or less indicates refusal to cooperate; 7-10 allows one piece of information to be revealed, while 11 + grants two bits of knowledge. The referee should, however, adjust the situation as he deems best. Repeat rolls may be made to persuade, but once information is passed, little more can be accomplished that week.

It is up to the players to work out plans for contacting the Vargr and getting the information. The referee is encouraged to let them use any reasonable method but should make each contact dangerous — the chance of Zhodani suspicion or interference should be strong. At each meeting, a great deal of atmosphere should be created, centering around the need to distract watching Zhodani or Vargr. Each meeting might be a little more tense, with a growing possibility of discovery, until a moment of crisis comes. At this point, Aegzirr should be found dead. It will be obvious that the Zhodani have caught him and silenced him for good.

The very next week, however, the second Vargr will make his appearance. At a social gathering, he slips a note to the adventurers, arranging contact. This Vargr, Thanaezgung, was the individual who actually risked all to get the information — his young relative was merely a go-between. Now Thanaezgung is convinced the Zhodani are on to him and closing in, and he offers to trade one last vital secret in return for Imperial aid in getting him to safety and for sanctuary. The adventurers must figure out how to get him out; the referee is strongly urged to have the Zhodani closing in as they attempt to get him out.

Information gained from the Vargr: The Vargr contact will turn over information — stolen files, microdots, messages, and the like — to the adventurers. The referee may dispense this data in any order desired. Not all need be given out.

1. The Vargr have access to the computer files of the Zhodani Embassy. This should be the first leak by the Vargr after contact.
2. The Zhodani have dossiers on a number of key Imperial personnel, among them the Ambassador, the Intelligence Chief, and several of the scientists, though **not** the recently arrived Kello Myest. They **do** have complete information, including photos, personality profiles, and extensive background information, on the adventurers themselves.
3. Zhodani security personnel have been leaving the Enclave for periods of 1-2 weeks, without any apparent reason. It is not known where they go, or how they travel, but it is possible that they are rotated back to their fleet every so often. Why this would be done is unknown.
4. Three times in the last month — about once a week — a number of sealed, sharproofed crates have been loaded onto Zhodani survey vehicles about to leave the Enclave. No one has ever seen them being unloaded after the vehicles return.

5. The Zhodani have been boasting in private that they have no need to look for affas themselves. In their words, they'll beat the Imperium without grubbing around in the ground . . . and they'll have affas very, very soon.

Computer files: The Vargr may be persuaded to tap into the Zhodani computer files; persuading them to do so is the same as getting one piece of information. The Vargr will be able to find which file or files the Zhodani consider to be important. If this is done, the following information may be revealed:

1. One file, labelled "Dzhagak," contains a map of the Lowlands. Marks have been made on the map, and next to each mark, in Zhodani characters, is a number and a date. The dates span a period of three months; the most recent date is for the current week. Each date corresponds to the loss of an Imperial Survey Mission. The players may, at the referee's option, be aware of this connection for one or two lost missions; further research will confirm this.
2. Under the name "Zjipyli" is another map of the Lowlands, this one indicating the area of the road along Flatcrest Ridge with a red circle.
3. Under the code name "Zjipyli" is an analysis of travel times between Efisah Prime and Efisah Two by Survey G-Carrier, ATV, native carts, and on foot. There is also an analysis of times by the same methods to a point half-way between the two cities.

The Zhodani code names — "Dzhagak" and "Zjipyli" — are not directly translatable but can be looked up in any computer which is programmed with general Zhodani information (such as the base computer). "Dzhagak" is a large, carrion-eating flying creature. "Zjipyli" is a small animal with the ability to change its color and, to some extent, its shape. Both are native to Zhodani.

The Vargr defection: Thanaezgung, when he defects, will bring one final piece of information. This is that the Zhodani G-Carrier which disappeared three months ago was not lost but is still employed in the Lowlands. It is part of a Zhodani plot to discredit the Imperium and is coded under the word "Dzhagak." No more is known.

Referees may increase the suspense of the adventure by having Thanaezgung mortally wounded at the height of the attempt to get him out of his quarters; in this case, he'll manage to gasp out part of the information, but the players will be forced to guess at his meaning.

It should be obvious that all of the facets of the diplomatic segment of the adventure will be helpful to the players as they move into the later sections; clues gathered here may prove especially useful if and when they face the Ordeal by Eshaar.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

Each week, the referee should remember to resolve all of the situations below.

1. Each side sends out one survey each week. The adventurers will be assigned to the Imperial Survey on a roll of 10+. If this roll is made, then the section on Survey Missions should be consulted in order to resolve the situation. Note that at least two weeks should elapse between one player survey and another.
2. The referee determines the outcome of the surveys. If the players were involved this week, the resolution is up to their actions. If not, roll on the table below.

   1-2 Survey lost with all personnel.
   3-4 Survey loses 2D-1 people but returns.
   5-6 Survey returns intact.

   The referee adds one to all Zhodani survey die rolls. (The players should not know this.)
3. Contact with Vargr traitors is resolved according to player actions.
4. The referee determines rumors and events for the week. These are passed on to the players.
5. The relative political positions of the native factions may be revealed.

This activity is repeated each week until the referee chooses to send the players on a Survey Mission that will be caught in the Zhodani Master Plan, triggering an Ordeal by Eshaar. This climax of the adventure will most likely resolve the game.

The Survey Mission

While diplomatic maneuvering is of extreme importance on Eshaar, the main thrust of both the Imperial and the Zhodani missions on the planet is the discovery of affas. Surveys search for affas; no one is foolish enough to stake everything on winning over the natives with purely diplomatic endeavors. Indeed, the discovery of affas by one side or the other could win native recognition, thanks to the native philosophical concepts that favor revelations by Eshaar as a prime determinate of policy.

Both sides organize forays into the Lowlands where affas is most likely to be found. Survey teams are sent out in tracked or anti-gravity vehicles of various types; the teams are generally made up of ten to twelve individuals, including two drivers, two geologists (the senior one being in command of the expedition), and a number of supporting security personnel.

Security from both natives and Zhodanis is vital on these expeditions. Sooner or later, the player characters are going to be rotated onto one of the survey missions. Survey procedure is outlined in the section that follows; after that, the Referee's Notes show the referee how to fit the Survey Mission into the overall context of *Ordeal by Eshaar*.

Survey Procedure: The survey leader will select several spots on his map where affas may be found. The vehicle will be taken to that area and the region thoroughly checked by security personnel for any sign of natives. Marine guards will be posted in a cordon around the survey area; the adventurers will generally form one or more roving patrols throughout the area and may also be called upon to assist the geologists. The geologists will use laser core-drills to take samples. Each sample is enclosed in a 3-meter long, 10 cm thick tube which is stored on board the vehicle to be returned to the dome for study. Several small explosive charges will be set off at some distance from one another, and geologists record the shock waves through a seismic monitor on board the vehicle. These recordings help map subsurface pockets in the rock which may be pools of affas. Survey members may also take samples of liquid pools using long-handled sampling gear, for affas pools may be covered by several meters of liquid sulfur and sulfuric acid.

Caution is to be exercised at all times to keep the natives from discovering the survey procedures used. The last survey mission which accidentally failed to cover its tracks sufficiently was condemned by native custom to the Ordeal of Eshaar and perished to a man. Each such incident has tended to solidify native opinion against the Imperium and could do great damage to the chances of success for the mission.

Referee's Notes: The referee must determine the number and location of sites to be scouted by the Survey Team, as well as the presence of natives or animals. Affas is not common. For each survey site, roll a 12 on 2D, with no DMs possible; this indicates the presence of affas. A second roll of 11+ on 2D establishes that the deposit is large enough for commercial use.

The referee is encouraged, however, to keep in mind the thrust of the adventure, centering around the Ordeal by Eshaar. Discovery of the affas at an early stage in the adventure may prematurely end the game. The referee should not

hesitate to modify outcomes secretly in order to orchestrate events in a fashion he desires.

One way to increase tension during this process would be to announce the discovery of a large deposit that is 60 meters below the ground, where it cannot be extracted without extensive drilling.

During survey missions, the referee should roll every hour for possible encounters (page 38), and for the possibility of a clash with Zhodani. A Zhodani party in the Lowlands has been responsible for the loss of a number of surveys in the past three months, though of course the Imperium has no way of knowing that these were not accidents.

The Zhodani Hunters: One of several plots being unfolded by the devious Zhodani was the "loss" of a Zhodani G-carrier three months ago. This vehicle has been in hiding in the Lowlands, moving from place to place according to a carefully pre-arranged schedule. Every week, a Zhodani "survey" makes a rendezvous with the hunters to overhaul the vehicle, bring supplies, and rotate the crew.

There are ten Zhodani troops in the party, armed as determined by the referee.

The Zhodani Hunters may be encountered on a roll of 9+ . . . or the referee may choose not to make this random but rather to control events himself.

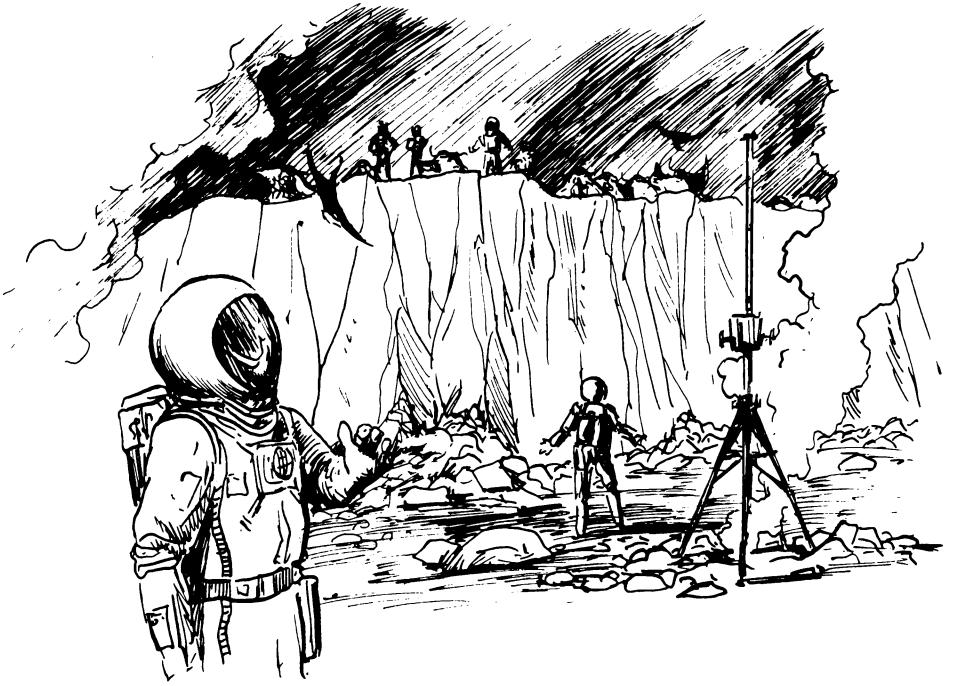
The Zhodani mission is to pick off Imperial survey teams and Ordeal parties, making each loss look like the action of native radicals or like an accident of some kind. Enough losses will tell against the Imperials by hardening native opinion against them. This Zhodani plot (code name: Dzhagak) is a part of the Zhodani Master Plan, which will be sprung when the adventurers take part in a survey of the area near Flatcrest Ridge.

The Zhodani Master Plan: Kello Myest, one of the staff geologists, is a spy in the pay of the Zhodani; his code name is Zjipyli. He has been given two missions: to create difficulties between the Imperials and the natives (without being suspected of duplicity), and to lead an Imperial survey mission to a prearranged location beneath the Flatcrest Ridge road between Efisah Prime and Efisah Two (see map on page).

Once this survey has been organized, the Zhodani will be informed of its schedule. The Zhodani Ambassador will organize a "scenic tour" along the ridge road in the company of important native leaders. The times are to coincide so that the survey team will be working when the natives and their Zhodani companions arrive. As a courtesy, even the Imperial Ambassador will be in the party; he and his immediate staff will have no idea of the Survey Team's exact itinerary.

The Zhodani G-carrier troops (code Dzhagak) will silently pick off any Imperial security people posted along the ridge. After this, the ambassadorial party will come along the road just in time to see the survey team blasting and drilling. Myest will make sure that such activities are carried out, even if the player-characters attached to the survey attempt to prevent them. He will order them to tend to their affairs — security — while he attends to hunting for affas.

As a result of this plot, the Imperials will be discredited in the eyes of the locals. The entire survey team will be forced to undergo the Ordeal by Eshaar, the only alternative being the eviction of the entire Imperial Mission from the planet. And, of course, the Zhodani hunters in the Lowlands are waiting for anyone to come through on an Ordeal; the loss of the Ordeal party would prove, yet again, that the Imperials are not in favor with Eshaar.



Referee's Note on the Plot: The Zhodani Master Plan is designed to force the players into an Ordeal by Eshaar, the climax of the adventure. It may be necessary for the referee to develop another plot to force the players into an Ordeal, should they figure out the Zhodani plan and avoid the trap. One possibility is that a **voluntary** Ordeal on the part of the adventurers might be a great "public relations" stunt to win the approval of the vifs. This, or any other reasonable excuse, can lead from the Survey Mission phase of the adventure into the Ordeal by Eshaar.

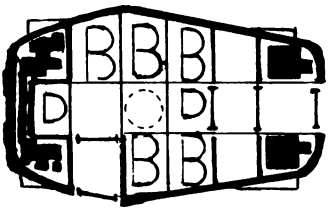
VEHICLES

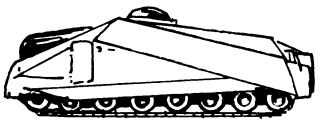
There are two types of vehicles in use on Eshaar — ATVs and G-carriers. They are kept in storage bays in the main dome, entering and leaving through airlocks. They are, of course, sharproofed; special gear in the airlocks decontaminates returning equipment. Large maintenance crews service all vehicles after each mission, since even with sharproofing, corrosion soon begins eating at moving parts, airlock seals, and the like.

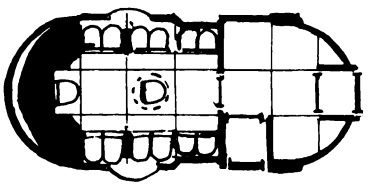
All Terrain Vehicles: (6) Cr 3,000,000. The All Terrain Vehicle (abbreviated ATV) is designed to serve admirably on many different worlds under widely varying conditions, including vacuum and insidious atmospheres, and high or low gravity. With a range between refuelings of 5,000 km (refueling is performed from a ship's power plant) ATVs are capable of speeds of up to 100 km per hour on roads and about half that cross-country. The vehicle is fully pressurized and contains complete (though cramped) eating, sleeping, and travel facilities for eight persons. The ATV weighs 10 tons.

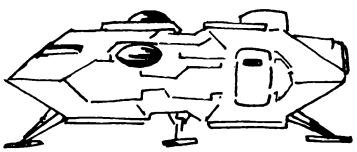
The Argosy Traveller is a specialized ATV designed for use in corrosive and

insidious atmospheres and is the most commonly used Imperial survey vehicle on Eshaar. It measures 4.5 meters wide, 9 meters long, and has a streamlined top that reaches 3 meters at its highest point. In the rugged Eshaaran Lowlands, top speed is 35 kph; in the somewhat smoother Highland plateaus, they are capable of 75 kph.









Argosy Travellers on Eshaar are not armed because of the delicate political situation. The observation dome may be replaced by a pulse-beam laser mount in other circumstances. Survey missions last a few days at the most, so the living space has been redesigned to hold up to 12 people. The vehicle carries enough food, oxygen, and recycling gear to operate for two weeks with 12 aboard. Power comes from Horst-Wessen hydrogen fuel cells, which are recharged at the dome after each mission.

Argosy Travellers, like other ATVs, are normally driven by individuals with ATV skill. Lack of ATV skill will add 20% to the travel time for any given terrain. ATV skill of 2 or more can be applied as DMs to various situations where skill might save the vehicle or occupants from injury.

G-Carrier: (8) CR 1,000,000, 8 tons. An enclosed military or quasi-military grav vehicle. The G-carrier is an armored air/raft type vehicle intended originally for troop carrier duties. Performance is similar to that of the air/raft, but the vehicle generally has a gun mount and an armored rear hatch door. It requires a crew of one (with air/raft

skill) plus a gunner for the craft's weapon, if any. It can carry 14 persons (including the driver and gunner) plus 2 tons of cargo (or assume 250 kg for each person not carried; thus driver, gunner, and 5 tons cargo).

On Eshaar, G-carriers are not armed so as not to offend the natives. While not subject to the dangers of surface travel, G-carriers on Eshaar are vulnerable to unusually violent atmospheric phenomena. Roll 2D each 30 minutes of flight. Turbulence will be encountered on a roll of 9+. The G-carrier will crash on a further 2D roll of 7+; positive DMs are allowed for pilot skill. A DM of -1 is applied if the vehicle's altitude is less than 20 meters.

ZHODANI VEHICLES: Zhodani G-carriers and ATVs are, for game purposes, identical to Imperial models. Due to the characters unfamiliarity with Zhodani controls, captured vehicles will move 20% slower than normally, and there will be a -1 DM made if the Zhodani G-carrier encounters air turbulence. Positive DMs for skill are still allowed. Zhodani vehicles may be secretly armed, with weapons and capabilities up to the referee. On Eshaar, G-carriers are preferred by the Zhodani over ATVs.

The vehicles in this adventure are based upon those found in Book 3 of the basic *Traveller* set. The G-carrier appears in Book 3 of Second Edition *Traveller*.

Lowland (Vah)
Highland (Sah)
Volcano
Sulfur River
Sulfur Sea
Highland Cliffs
Canyon
Native Road
Native Cliffside Cave City (Efisah)

Scale: 1 hex = 1 kilometer.

Road
Flatcrest Ridge
Sah
Sah
Efisah Two
Vah Ifsiss
Efisah Prime
Offworlder
Enclave

As outlined previously, events in the DIPLIMATIC SITUATION and SURVEY MISSION segments of this adventure lead the players into an Ordeal by Eshaar which will probably come about as a result of the Zhodani Master Plan. There is, of course, no "law" requiring participation in an Ordeal. Imperial hopes, however, would be shattered if the adventurers, after violating Eshaaran custom in the sight of a native witness, refused to accept "atonement" at the hands of Eshaar. When caught breaking native taboos, the adventurers will be placed under guard in one of the conference rooms in the Enclave, under observation by both natives and Imperials, there to wait for the Ordeal the next day.

They will be taken in animal-drawn native carts to Efisah Two, where the ceremony commences. From here, to the accompaniment of an impressive ceremony in which the natives invoke the attention of Eshaar to the adventurers and their plight, the group will be sent down a path leading along a fault line into the mists of the Lowlands along the shore of a sulfur river 20 meters below the cliff top.

The goal of the adventurers is to cross the Lowlands back to Efisah Prime. There is no time limit, save that posed by dwindling air supplies. The group will have to carry spare air tanks. For this purpose, native sleds are available. Made of affas-plastic, they are light, strong enough to carry up to 20 air tanks, and can be used to float loads across rivers at fords.

Spare tanks weigh 2.5 kg apiece; each carries 3 hours of compressed oxygen. They clip two at a time into racks carried on the wearer's back and are designed to be changed easily even in vacuum or poisonous atmospheres. The adventurers will have to plan their trek ahead of time, estimating how many tanks they will need to carry to get them across the Lowlands. If the tanks are carried on sleds, 5 character strength points are needed for each 10 tanks. Five character strength points applied to 20 tanks will haul the sled along at ½ speed. The adventurers may take as many tanks, and as many sleds, as they like.

Weapons, special gear, and vehicles are officially forbidden, but there is some possibility, at the referee's discretion, that friends on the Embassy staff will be able to arrange for some small weapons or equipment to be smuggled into the group's possession or cached near the Ordeal site.

They will not have maps available during the Ordeal, but since Eshaar has a magnetic field, suit compasses can be used to maintain a steady course. The players should have ample time before the Ordeal to study the referee's map, noting landmarks that will help them stay on course and recognize the mouth of the canyon where Efisah Prime is located. Remember, however, that visibility is limited to 50 meters.

The referee will lead the adventurers through the Ordeal allowing them to choose their course based on his descriptions. Every half-hour of game time while they are moving at full speed, they will move one hex on the referee's map and roll to have an Encounter. This continues until the group reaches Efisah Prime, runs out of air, or falls to native dangers or Zhodani ambush.

A Zhodani ambush is an integral part of the adventure; clues provided in the body of the adventure should alert the players to this. The conditions in the Lowlands, where visibility is poor, should turn the tables in the party's favor if they are alert. Should the Zhodani G-carrier used by the hunters be captured, the adventurers may use it to get to Efisah Prime. They should remember, however, that it must be abandoned before they actually enter the canyon below the city.

Should the group successfully navigate the Lowlands, the appropriate number of points is added to the total for the Imperial party in the Sha Ev. It may also be possible that the adventurers will accidentally discover affas — the referee may wish to arrange this even if the encounter tables do not so dictate — and clinch the Imperial position on the planet.

Referees should note that **all** individuals involved in an observed transgression will be forced to go on the Ordeal together. This includes any NPCs — including the Zhodani spy — who might have been with the group when they were caught. NPCs are invaluable to the referee as sources of information, examples of the hazards of the environment, and creators of danger or suspense throughout the Ordeal.

Eshaar is a dangerous planet; persons travelling outside of the protected Embassy Enclave will find themselves facing many hazards. The poor visibility, limiting line of sight to a matter of only 50 meters, makes travel difficult and communications virtually impossible. The weather conditions are bizarre in a climate where a cold snap freezes sulfur . . . but never quite brings water to a liquid state. And the life-forms on the planet, often crystalline in form, tend to look more like rocks and mineral outcroppings than living organisms, making movement out of doors an unsettling experience at the least.

THE TERRAIN OF ESHAAR

The map opposite represents the terrain of Eshaar between the only two native cities (efisahs) known to the Imperium. The Enclave is constructed just outside the structure known as Efisah Prime — in fact, the Main Meeting Hall in the Enclave looks into one of the caves within the city. Efisah Two lies 25 kilometers west-southwest of Prime on the other side of the Vah (Lowlands) Ifsiss.

The highly eroded Sah (Highlands) which divide the Lowland regions with narrow, steep-sided ridges, are composed largely of tough basaltic rock which erodes at a much slower rate than the sedimentary layers that were once present. As this lighter rock erodes over a relatively short geologic period, the Highland ridges are left behind. Highly acidic sulfur rivers have carved out deep canyons, the sifahsah feesh, in the Highlands; the sides of these canyons are often dotted with many caverns formed by subterranean erosion. It is in these cave complexes that the Eshaar Ashah have their cities.

Roads — actually fairly smooth tracks worn by native carts — connect the efisahs and permit some degree of inter-city communication. The cities are not interdependent, however; each is a self-contained whole. Relations have not been established with other cities, since the Imperium cannot afford the time to create and foster a new pro-Imperial party elsewhere; it took years, and the loss of four mission domes, to get as far as they have with Efisah Prime. Starting over elsewhere is impossible.

ENCOUNTER PROCEDURES

The referee should roll for encounters for adventurers outside the Enclave once every half-hour. The referee will note whether they are in highland terrain, non-river lowland terrain, or river/seaside terrain.

Highland terrain: Adventurers on foot may move 2 hexes each half hour. Each half hour, the referee rolls 2D; an encounter on the Highland Encounter table will occur on 8+. Canyons may be crossed only on natural bridges shown on the map, or by descending the cliff. Crossing between Highlands and Lowlands (except below cities) takes 1 hour. Instead of rolling for encounters, roll 2D for a 10+ to fall and receive 3D wounds.

Lowland terrain: Adventurers on foot move 1 hex each half hour, rolling 2D once each half hour for an encounter on 8+. 3D are rolled on the Lowland Encounter table. ATVs roll for an encounter once between each stop to search for a river ford. Note that travel speeds may be changed by encounter results or by sleds.

Riverside/seaside terrain: The sulfur rivers of the Lowlands are swift-running, steep-banked, and treacherous. They may only be crossed at fords. Fords are not permanent features in the ever-changing topography; old crossings are broken down, new ones built up, almost daily, so new fords must be searched for with each attempt to cross a river. Seas cannot be forded.

Each attempt to find a ford takes ½ hour. A ford is found on a roll of 9+, with a DM of +1 allowed for every 2 characters engaged in the search. Each ½ hour, 2D are rolled; an encounter occurs on 8+. 2D are then rolled on the Riverside/Seaside Encounter table. The referee determines — based on the situation — whether an encounter result is applied to the entire party away from the river, the entire party crossing the river, or a few people searching for a crossing apart from the others.

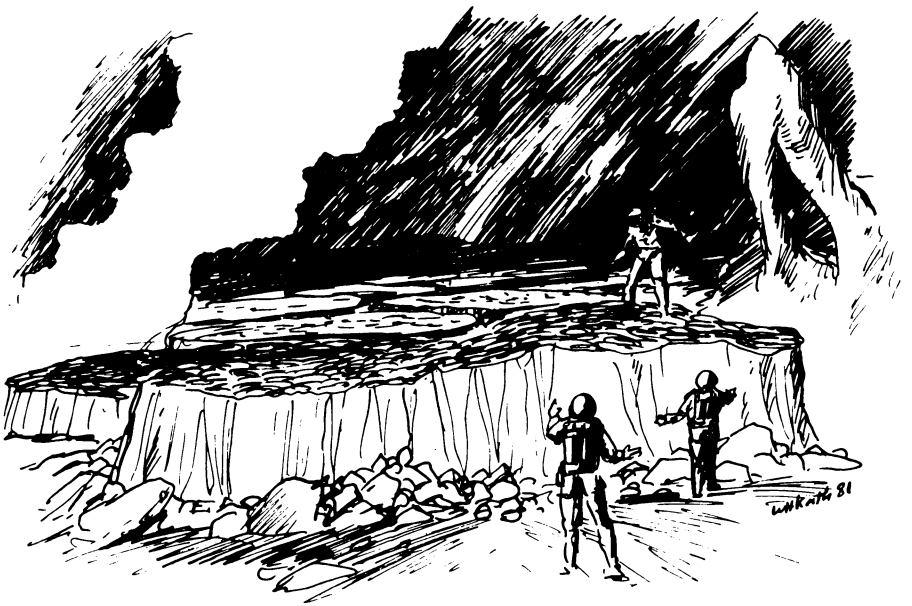
ENCOUNTER TABLES

Lowlands	*Highlands*	*Riverside/Seaside*
3 12D Grazers	2 WEATHER	2 WEATHER
4 1 Filter	3 Dense Plant Life	3 1 Liquid Filter
5 WEATHER	4 Landslide	4 Soft Ground
6 Flying Grazers	5 Eshaar Ashah	5 Flash Flood
7 Bog	6 Crevasse	6 Bog
8 Corrosive Gases	7 WEATHER	7 WEATHER
9 Crystalline Plant	8 5D Domestic Grazers	8 Corrosive Gases
10 Volcanic Eruption	9 Crystalline Plant	9 8D Grazers
11 Falling Rocks	10 Ravine	10 1 Liquid Filter
12 Seismic Quake	11 Flying Grazers	11 WEATHER
13 Fog	12 WEATHER	12 Falling Rocks
14 10D Grazers		
15 Ravine		
16 WEATHER		
17 Liquid Sulfur Pool		
18 WEATHER		

EXPLANATION OF ENCOUNTERS

Grazers: To off-worlders, these creatures appear to be large, flat rocks; a herd of them looks like a single rock surface split by fissures and cracks. They will be stationary when first encountered and will only move if startled. The adventurers will startle them on 8+. The grazers may crush individuals between them or against real rocks; characters who have climbed on top of them may fall (roll dexterity or less to prevent) and be overrun. Two damage points are suffered in falling; if caught among a moving herd, roll 4+ to escape 4D wounds with a DM-5 if the individual fell among them.

Grazer	3,200 kg	55/35	Mesh	5	see notes	A0F0S1



Filter: Extremely large sessile animal which, when first seen, will look like a grey boulder. When feeding, it exposes a 4-meter wide maw which sucks in air, liquid, and anything else within 2 meters that weighs less than 150 kg. (See filters in Basic TRAVELLER, Book 3.)

Filter	36,000 kg	50/28	None	6D	Teeth	A7F0S0

Liquid Filter: Similar to the creature above. This filter lives in sulfur rivers; when it feeds, it creates a powerful current that can knock adventurers down as far as 10 meters upstream. One adventurer will be trapped on 7+; each of the others must throw strength or less to regain his footing against the current. The referee will determine which character, if any, is actually trapped.

Liquid Filter	24,000 kg	40/20	None	6D	Teeth	A7F0S0

Domestic Grazer: Smaller version of the Lowland grazers, used by natives as herd animals. Danger is the same as for the grazer above, but after 1 combat round, native shepherds (2D of them) will appear and calm the startled beasts.

Crystalline Plant: Common Eshaaran plant known by the Imperial name of Glitterslice. It grows in large crystalline formations. Edges of the plant are sharp; if touched, they breach the suit on a 9+. The crystal will shatter when touched on a 6+, causing a bad impression on native witnesses present.

Flying Grazer: Vast swarms of tiny animals known to the Imperials as Fire Gnats. When encountered by adventurers, they will be blown against vacc suit faceplates or vehicle windows and killed in great numbers; visibility is rapidly reduced to zero. Swarm passes after 5D minutes. Faceplates may be partially cleared with gloves — moving will be subject to the possibility of stumbling on a 9+ each round. Falling inflicts one damage point and breaches the vacc suit on a 10+. Any available liquid (roll 7+ for a nearby pool of sulfur) will clear vision entirely.

Eshaar Ashah: Natives will prove to be Radical Isolationists on a 10+ and, if so, may attack. If they are Radicals, use the Book 3 Reaction Table with a DM-5.

Bog: Thick, red mud with a surface layer of ash; looks like solid ground. The party leader must throw dexterity or less to avoid; a vehicle avoids being enmired on a roll of 10+ (DM+ATV skill). Each combat round, throw 10+ to escape; DM-1 per round trapped, DM+1 per companion assisting. Individual will be pulled under in 3D rounds.

Dense Plant Life: Thick growth of crystalline plants makes passage impossible. Individuals are unable to proceed, detouring around the growth for 1D hours. Vehicles may force their way through, but native witnesses could be offended.

Corrosive Gases: Highly acidic gas cloud from volcanic vent will begin corroding the player's suits, breaching them in 6D minutes unless rinsed off by a liquid. The party leader must throw intelligence or less to warn the rest of the party and avoid this hazard.

Dense Fog: All forward progress must cease for 1D hours.

Soft Ground: Speed is reduced by ½. Throw for another encounter before leaving this hex. ATVs will be enmired on 9+ (DM+ATV skill); roll each combat round for a 10+ to escape.

Earthquake: Individuals will be thrown to the ground unless they roll strength or less. Injury occurs on a 12; 2D damage points are taken. Suit is breached on a roll of 10+.

Ravine: See Book 3, p. 31.

Falling Rocks: Rocks from overhanging precipice dislodge and fall. 2D rocks fall, hitting a vehicle or individual on a 10+. Suits are breached on a 9+. 2D damage is caused when hit is made. Vehicles are not affected, but another encounter must be rolled for while individuals clear path.

Crevasse: A deep crevasse, 50 meters across, blocks forward progress. Party must retrace course and try another route, spending another hour in that hex.

Flash Flood: Individuals will be swept away unless they throw strength or less. They will be carried for 2D combat rounds; each round, throw strength or less to catch onto a rock. For each round a character is **not** anchored, 1D wounds are suffered and his vacc suit is breached on a 9+. Vehicles will be overturned and rendered useless on a roll of 10+.

Volcanic Eruption: Small vent explodes with shower of rocks, gases, and molten rock. Each individual must roll dexterity or less to avoid 3D wounds; vacc suits breached on 9+. ATVs will be damaged on 11+ and require 2 hours to repair. Roll for 4 more encounters. Also, roll 2D for a lava flow on a 9+. Flow is slower than a man's walk but will reach and destroy damaged vehicle in 2D minutes.

Landslide: Ground gives way under party near edge of precipice. Individuals throw dexterity or less to avoid fall. Vehicle falls on 8+. Each falling individual receives between 1 and 6 dice of wounds; suits are breached on 9+. Vehicle passengers receive 1D injuries apiece. Vehicle caught by landslide will be rendered unusable.

Liquid Sulfur Pool: Banks will crumble under individuals around pool on a 6+. Throw strength or less to climb out each round, DM-1 for each character assisting.

Liquid sulfur pools may also be encountered if adventurers state that they are looking for them, such as when they are searching for liquid to rinse off vacc suits. A pool will always be found on a 7+.

These pools may cover affas; it will be there on a roll of 10+. Referees should describe it as a purple or black liquid under a layer of liquid sulfur and let the players recognize it if they can. Players should not know the chances of finding a pool or that affas might be in it.

Referees may want to allow the discovery of affas deliberately rather than relying on a die roll. It will be of sufficient quantity to meet Imperial requirements for some time to come and will not require drilling to tap.

WEATHER

On a WEATHER result on the encounter table, refer to this section and roll one die.

Party on Ground

1. **Thunderstorm:** Violent wind, severe lightning, heavy rain and sulfur hail. Lasts 1D hours, halts party's progress. Ground vehicles enmired on 10+; escape on 9+ throw each combat round. Every ½ hour, roll 2D; lightning will strike (see #5 below) on 10+.
2. **Acid Rain:** Downpour lasts 1D hours, but continued progress is possible. In 2D hours, suits will corrode and be breached. This corrosion can be stopped by washing in liquid sulfur.
3. **Freeze:** Drop in temperature causes sulfur to freeze. Rivers are crusted over with yellowish ice for 2D hours; individuals (but not vehicles) may cross on a 9+. After one hour, sulfur forming on suits or vehicle windows will obscure vision; speeds are reduced to ½ normal.
4. **Tornado:** Funnel cloud will touch down on 10+. Adventurers each throw 9+ to escape 4D wounds. ATV will be overturned and wrecked on 10+.
5. **Lightning:** Bolt strikes among party. The referee rolls 2D; on a 10+, someone has been hit. Each individual then rolls 2D; the lowest roll is the one hit and takes 6D wounds. Vehicle will be hit on roll of 7+; referee may choose to apply damage of some kind. Characters will not be hit if they have taken shelter in a cave, among rocks, or in a vehicle (even if the vehicle is hit).
6. **Mirage:** The referee will describe the landscape in the adjacent hex in the direction the adventurers are facing. He may also roll again on the encounter table and describe the results. What they are seeing, however, is an optical illusion, which may influence their actions for good or ill.

BREACHED SUITS

Several encounters call for breached suits as one possible outcome. Breaching a suit on Eshaar is a dangerous matter. When a breach is made, 1 to 6D of wounds are taken at once, in addition to all other wounds called for from poisonous gas and acid forced in by Eshaar's higher pressures. 1D additional wounds are taken each round until the suit is patched.

A suit can be patched by a companion using a repair kit. Once the suit is patched, poisons already in the suit will cause 1D additional wounds per hour until the victim is taken to a place where his suit can safely be removed.

Referee's Notes

Ordeal by Eshaar is designed as an adventure where subtle hints and actions are as important as the traditional facets of force and skill; the players will be rewarded for thinking, as well as for doing. The referee must carefully orchestrate this adventure to get the most out of the potential for excitement, building events to a climax in which the adventurers, trapped by Zhodani scheming, have the opportunity to turn the tables on their foes and win victory from the jaws of defeat.

Clues and hints should be liberally sprinkled throughout the course of the adventure; without being too blatant, the referee must give the players every chance to reason out the presence of the Zhodani hunters and, possibly, also the broad sweep of the Zhodani Master Plan. With this knowledge in the adventurers' hands, the hunters can be hunted, the Ordeal can be turned around, and — should affas be discovered — the Imperium wins a great victory. It should be hinted that, in such a case, a grateful Imperium would be likely to reward the players handsomely.

Naturally, the many facets of Eshaar could not be fully presented in an adventure like this one; referees and players will find great scope for further encounters and adventures within the framework provided here. As an example, the operations of the Survey Teams might be examined in greater depth without the hindrance of native beliefs. Adventures can be created around Imperial and Zhodani survey teams on an inhospitable world, racing one another for the discovery of affas . . . and occasionally clashing in outright combat. This will serve to please those who prefer firefights to diplomatic intrigue. Others may prefer to concentrate on the intrigue within the dome. Some players may choose to take the roles of Zhodani characters and maneuver against their Imperial opponents and unknown traitors.

Ordeal by Eshaar represents FASA's first step into the field of publishing adventures. We've tried to keep the format close enough to that expected by TRAVELLER fans in their adventures, while at the same time introducing some unique new ideas and concepts. We hope you enjoy the end result.

Notes

As the Fifth Frontier War locks the Spinward Marches in mortal combat, a band of adventurers journeys outside the Imperium on a mission of vital importance. Their destination: **ESHAAR**, *a dangerous and hostile world where temperatures average 150°C . . . where sulfuric acid takes the place of water . . . where enigmatic aliens hold the key to success or failure for the Imperium. The mission: discover — and secure control of —* **affas**, *a mineral compound that could turn the tide in the Fifth Frontier War. The opposition: the devious Zhodani, who will stop at nothing to ruin the Imperial cause.*

Ordeal by Eshaar *is a unique adventure that pits the travellers against a combination of hostile Zodani, mysterious aliens . . . and the dangers of the planet itself. From subtle confrontations amid the false gaiety of the diplomatic enclave to the struggle for survival on the world's surface, this is . . .* **Ordeal by Eshaar**.